



Drawn by Dmitry Paramonov (Rīga, Latvia, March 2021)

Dedicated to Ottó Merkl (1957–2021)

This volume is respectfully dedicated to our friend and colleague Ottó MERKL (1957–2021) who unexpectedly died on the 19th February during the late stages of its production. Ottó was the Head of Coleoptera and Head of Zoological Collections at the Hungarian Museum of Natural History and the Budapest Zoo, and was a world-renowned specialist in the Coleoptera family Tenebrionidae, especially the subfamily Lagriinae, as well as a museum curator of the highest standard and of international repute.

Appointed soon after graduation in 1981, Ottó served 40 years as an employee of the Hungarian Museum, where he followed in the footsteps of his mentor and predecessor, the tenebrionid specialist Zoltán Kaszab (1915–1986). During his career Ottó did much to raise the reputation and scope of the Hungarian Museum's globally significant collections. He formed a bridge with the world scientific community, and was known and admired by taxonomic and faunistic entomologists, professional and amateur, as an example of a scientist with a deep specialisation, but at the same time, a broad overview of entomology and the management of Museums and Collections. He published over 220 scientific papers, several books and book chapters, has almost 100 species named in his honour, and was deeply involved in the Hungarian Entomological Society all his life. In 2019 the Society awarded him their highest honour, the "Frivaldszky Gold Memorial Plaque", of which, in his 62, he was the youngest ever recipient.

It is to be regretted that during Ottó's last years, the status and future of the Museum to which he dedicated his life was plagued by uncertainties outside his control, which must have increased his stress; he died on his way into work, not long after taking on the role of Head of the whole Zoological Collections.

Ottó will be fondly remembered all over the world, for many years to come, as a model of a scientist-curator and as the man who helped build the remarkable collections of the Hungarian Museum, and put them firmly on the world map.

Words and opinions by M. Barclay and D. Telnov, with data taken from "In memoriam Ottó Merkl (1957–2021)" by G. Szél.